

The Origin
of
the World

Page 4:

Gustave Moreau, *Cleopatra*, 1887.

Watercolour and gouache highlights, 39.5 x 25 cm.

Musée du Louvre, Paris.

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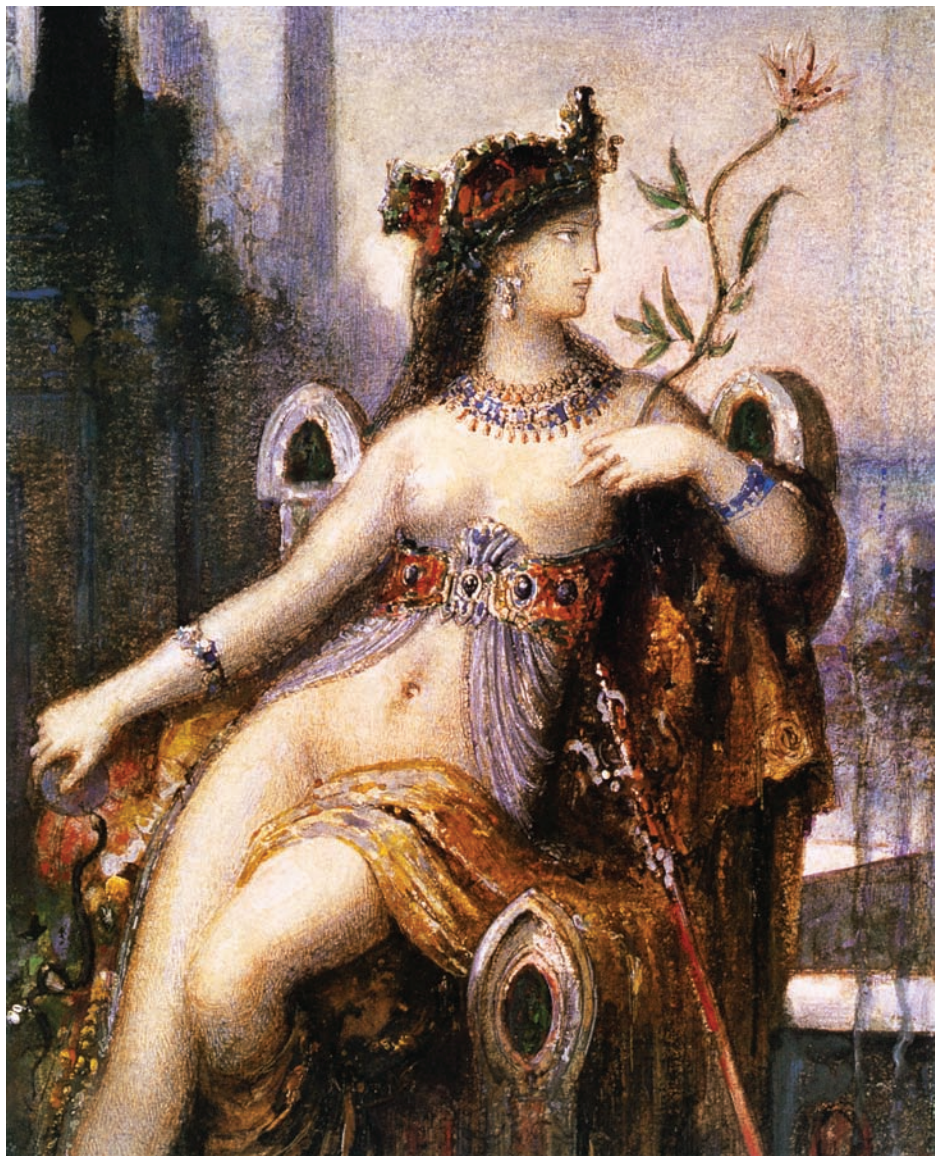
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The famous psychologist, professor Lacan, was the last owner of Courbet's *The Origin of the World*. He loved the painting so much that he couldn't even bring himself to look at it. Instead, he hid it behind a "safer" painting.

The Chinese called it the "valley of the roses" (watch out for the thorns!), the Persians, the "honey-pot" (watch out for the bees!), and the Greeks, "the mound of Venus" (mind the steep climb!); to each era its fantasies and its theories about the feminine mystique. Then there are the testimonies of poets, painters, and even of some famous psychiatrists. *The Origin of the World* is a work of art only suitable for lovers of intrigue.



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Gustav Klimt

Ruskin

EGON
SCHIELE

G. Courbet

Manet

Rodin

Michel Delacroix

Rueby


Rembrandt

Degas

Paul Gauguin



Song of Songs

- ³ All night long on my bed
I looked for the one my heart loves;
I looked for him but did not find him.
- ² I will get up now and go about the city,
through its streets and squares;
I will search for the one my heart loves.
So I looked for him but did not find him.



Sleeping Venus

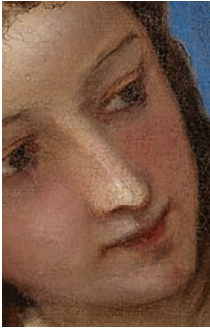
Giorgione, c. 1508-1510

Oil on canvas, 108.5 x 175 cm

Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister

Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden, Dresden



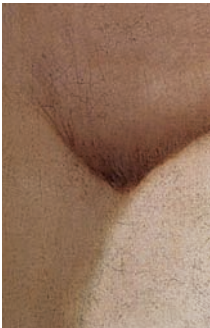
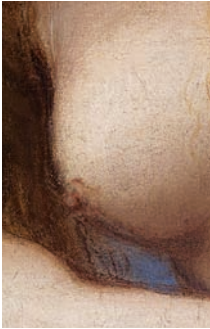


³ The watchmen found me
as they made their rounds in the city.
"have you seen the one my heart loves?"

⁴ Scarcely had I passed them
when I found the one my heart loves.

I held him and would not let him go
till I had brought him to my mother's house,
to the room of the one who conceived me.

⁵ Daughters of Jerusalem, I charge you
by the gazelles and by the does of the field:



Venus Rising from the Sea
("Venus Anadyomene")

Titian, c. 1520

Oil on canvas, 75.8 x 57.6 cm

National Gallery of Scotland, Edinburgh



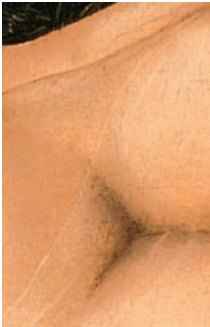


Do not arouse or awaken love
until it so desires.

⁶ Who is this coming up from the wilderness
like a column of smoke,
perfumed with myrrh and incense
made from all the spices of the merchant?

⁷ Look! It is Solomon's carriage,
escorted by sixty warriors,
the noblest of Israel,

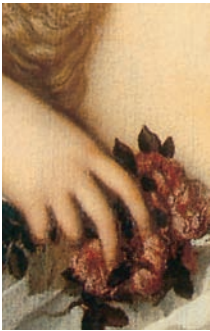
⁸ all of them wearing the sword,
all experienced in battle,



The Nymph at the Fountain

Lucas Cranach the Elder, c. 1530-1534
Oil on wood, 75 x 120 cm
Thyssen Bornemisza Museum, Madrid





each with his sword at his side,
prepared for the terrors of the night.
⁹ King Solomon made for himself the carriage;
he made it of wood from Lebanon.
¹⁰ Its posts he made of silver,
its base of gold.
Its seat was upholstered with purple,
its interior inlaid with love.
Daughters of Jerusalem, ¹¹ come out,
and look, you daughters of Zion.

Venus of Urbino

Titian, 1538

Oil on canvas, 119 x 165 cm
Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence

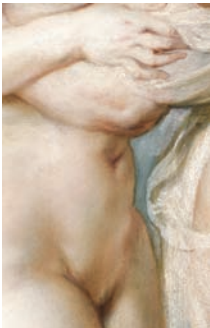




Look on King Solomon wearing a crown,
the crown with which his mother crowned him
on the day of his wedding,
the day his heart rejoiced.

He

⁴ How beautiful you are, my darling!
Oh, how beautiful!
Your eyes behind your veil are doves.
Your hair is like a flock of goats
descending from the hills of Gilead.



The Three Graces

Peter Paul Rubens, 1630-1635
Oil on wood, 220.5 x 182 cm
Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid





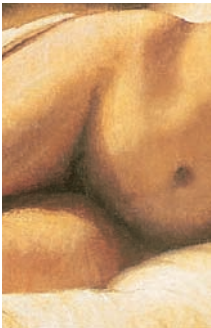
² Your teeth are like a flock of sheep just shorn,
coming up from the washing.

Each has its twin;
not one of them is alone.

³ Your lips are like a scarlet ribbon;
your mouth is lovely.

Your temples behind your veil
are like the halves of a pomegranate.

⁴ Your neck is like the tower of David,
built with courses of stone;



Danaë

Rembrandt, 1636

Oil on canvas, 185 x 202.5 cm

The State Hermitage Museum, St Petersburg





- on it hang a thousand shields,
all of them shields of warriors.
- ⁵ Your breasts are like two fawns,
like twin fawns of a gazelle
that browse among the lilies.
- ⁶ Until the day breaks
and the shadows flee,
I will go to the mountain of myrrh
and to the hill of incense.
- ⁷ You are altogether beautiful, my darling;
there is no flaw in you.

Bathsheba with King David's Letter
or Bathsheba Bathing

Rembrandt, 1654
Oil on canvas, 142 x 142 cm
Musée du Louvre, Paris



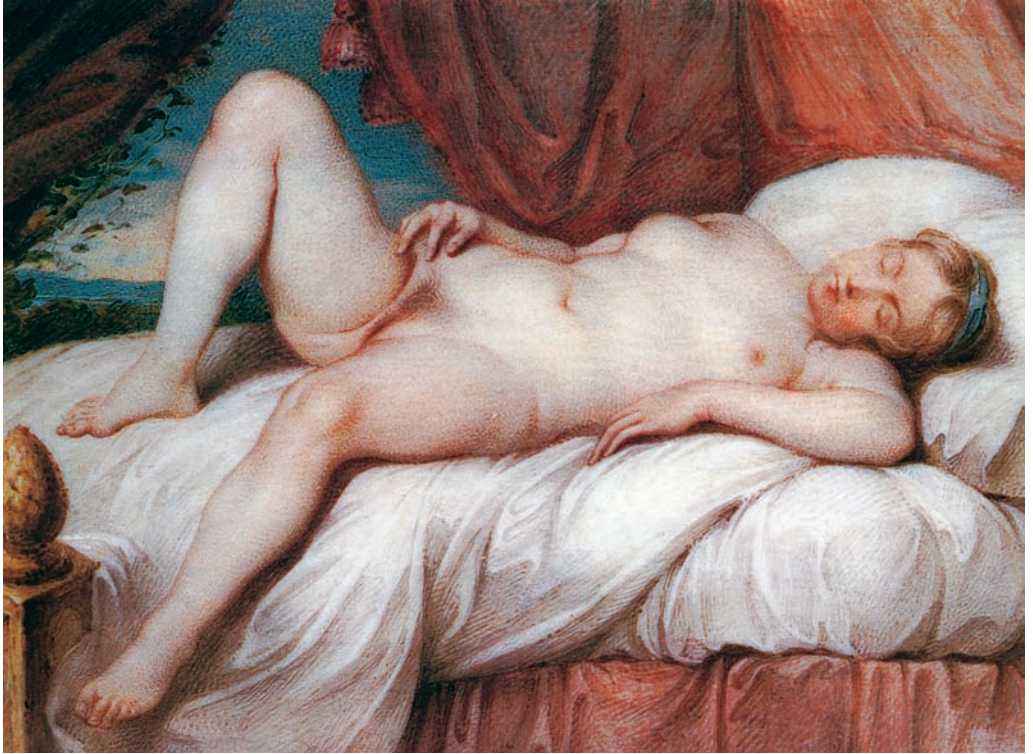


⁸ Come with me from Lebanon, my bride,
 come with me from Lebanon.
Descend from the crest of Amana,
 from the top of Senir, the summit of Hermon,
from the lions' dens
 and the mountain haunts of leopards.
⁹ You have stolen my heart, my sister, my bride;
 you have stolen my heart
with one glance of your eyes,
 with one jewel of your necklace.



Young Woman Sleeping

Anonymous, 18th century
French miniature painted on ivory

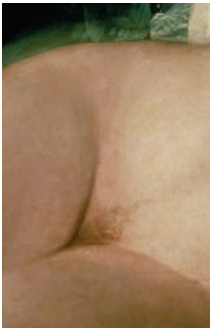




¹⁰ How delightful is your love, my sister, my bride!
How much more pleasing is your love than wine,
and the fragrance of your perfume
more than any spice!

¹¹ Your lips drop sweetness as the honeycomb,
my bride;

milk and honey are under your tongue.
The fragrance of your garments
is like the fragrance of Lebanon.



Nude Maja

Francisco de Goya, 1797-1800
Oil on canvas, 98 x 191 cm
Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid





- ¹² You are a garden locked up, my sister, my bride;
you are a spring enclosed, a sealed fountain.
- ¹³ Your plants are an orchard of pomegranates
with choice fruits,
with henna and nard,
- ¹⁴ nard and saffron,
calamus and cinnamon,
with every kind of incense tree,
with myrrh and aloes
and all the finest spices.

The Woman with White Stockings

Eugène Delacroix, 1830
Oil on canvas, 26 x 33 cm
Musée du Louvre, Paris